

BOISE PROJECT, BOISE PROJECT OFFICE
(Central Snake Project Office)
214 Broadway
Boise
Ada County
Idaho

HAER No. ID-17-C

HAER
ID
1-BOISE,
29C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

HAER
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1-BOISE,
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I. INTRODUCTION

Location: 214 Broadway, Boise, Ada County, Idaho

Quad: Boise South

UTM: Zone: 11
Easting: 5 65 205
Northing: 48 28 505

Date of Construction: 1911-1912

Architect & Builder: Preliminary architectural plans were prepared by an unknown firm and subsequently revised by local Reclamation Service staff; the primary contractor was Whiteway-Lee Construction Company, Boise

Present Owner: United States Bureau of Reclamation
Pacific Northwest Regional Office
Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
Boise, Idaho 83724

Present Use: Office facility for the Boise Project Board of Control, the New York Irrigation District, and the Central Snake Projects Office

Significance: The Boise Project Office is significant as an early Reclamation Service (predecessor agency to the Bureau of Reclamation) office building associated with the beginnings of the Boise Irrigation Project. The building is particularly significant because it is very well maintained and has sustained relatively few alterations. It is an exceptionally intact example of an early 20th century office building representing the design, materials, and workmanship of the period.

Historian: Fredric L. Quivik
Architectural Historian
Renewable Technologies, Inc.
511 Metals Bank Building
Butte, MT 59701

II. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Boise Project Office was built during the fall of 1911 and completed in January 1912 to house engineers and administrators for the Boise Irrigation Project of the United States Reclamation Service. It was the first permanent office of the Reclamation Service in Boise. After renting office space in downtown Boise for nearly a decade and weathering a controversy in which boosters in the nearby communities of Nampa and Caldwell tried to lure the permanent Reclamation office to one of those towns, the Reclamation Service decided to build a permanent office on land it had secured for a warehouse and railroad siding. The Boise Project Board of Control -- the operating organization made up of the several irrigation districts served by the Boise Project -- took over the operation of the Boise Project from the federal government in 1927 and occupied the Boise Project Office and assumed its operation and maintenance. The Board of Control has been the principal occupant of the building since that time.

Background of the U.S. Reclamation Service and the Boise Project

In the United States, the region west of a line defined approximately by the 100th meridian and east of the Pacific coastal zone receives less than twenty inches of precipitation in most years. Some parts of that large area, such as the Interior Basin, receive less than ten inches annually. Consequently, the area was ignored for settlement by agriculturally-based groups other than Mormons for most of the 19th century. The Oregon Trail, for example, led Americans in search of new farmlands from the relatively moist Midwest, across the "Great American Desert," to western Oregon, where ample rain fell. Although some hardy souls tried to establish farms on the arid or semi-arid lands, most failed, and large stretches of the public domain outside of river valleys remained uncultivated.

Under the Homestead Act of 1862, a homesteader was limited to 160 acres of land. Between them, a husband and wife could claim 320 acres. With ample rainfall this amount of land was sufficient to support a family, but in regions which received less than twenty inches of precipitation a family would have difficulty earning its livelihood on such limited acreage. After the Civil War, Congress passed a number of pieces of legislation aimed at encouraging homesteading in the drier regions. Each of these helped to increase the amount of public land which was turned over to private farmers and ranchers, but they did little to bring needed supplemental water to arid lands.¹

The United States government did little to stimulate the development of irrigation in the West until John W. Powell had surveyed the region for possible water storage sites and published his findings in his 1878 Report on

the Lands of the Arid Region. Powell's report demonstrated that many more acres of land in the West could be irrigated through the use of storage reservoirs. In a subsequent article published in Century Magazine (1890), Powell estimated that as many as 120 million acres could be irrigated if all of the reasonably available storage were developed. (Powell was too optimistic: by 1960, some 30 million acres were under irrigation, of which about 22% were part of federal irrigation projects)²

The work by Powell and others aroused growing interest in promoting a concerted effort to increase irrigation in the West. In 1890, the Census Office asked Frederick H. Newell of the United States Geological Survey to conduct a census of irrigated farms. In his report, Newell not only provided numbers, he also described how most irrigation projects were implemented and maintained by individuals or small groups, that there was little evidence of comprehensive management of reclamation activities, and that the result was a haphazard and inefficient system. At about the same time, western railroads, especially the Great Northern, began sponsoring Irrigation Congresses which discussed means and offered resolutions by which the United States could take a more comprehensive approach to developing large-scale irrigation projects. The first major result of these efforts was the passage of the Carey Act of 1894.³

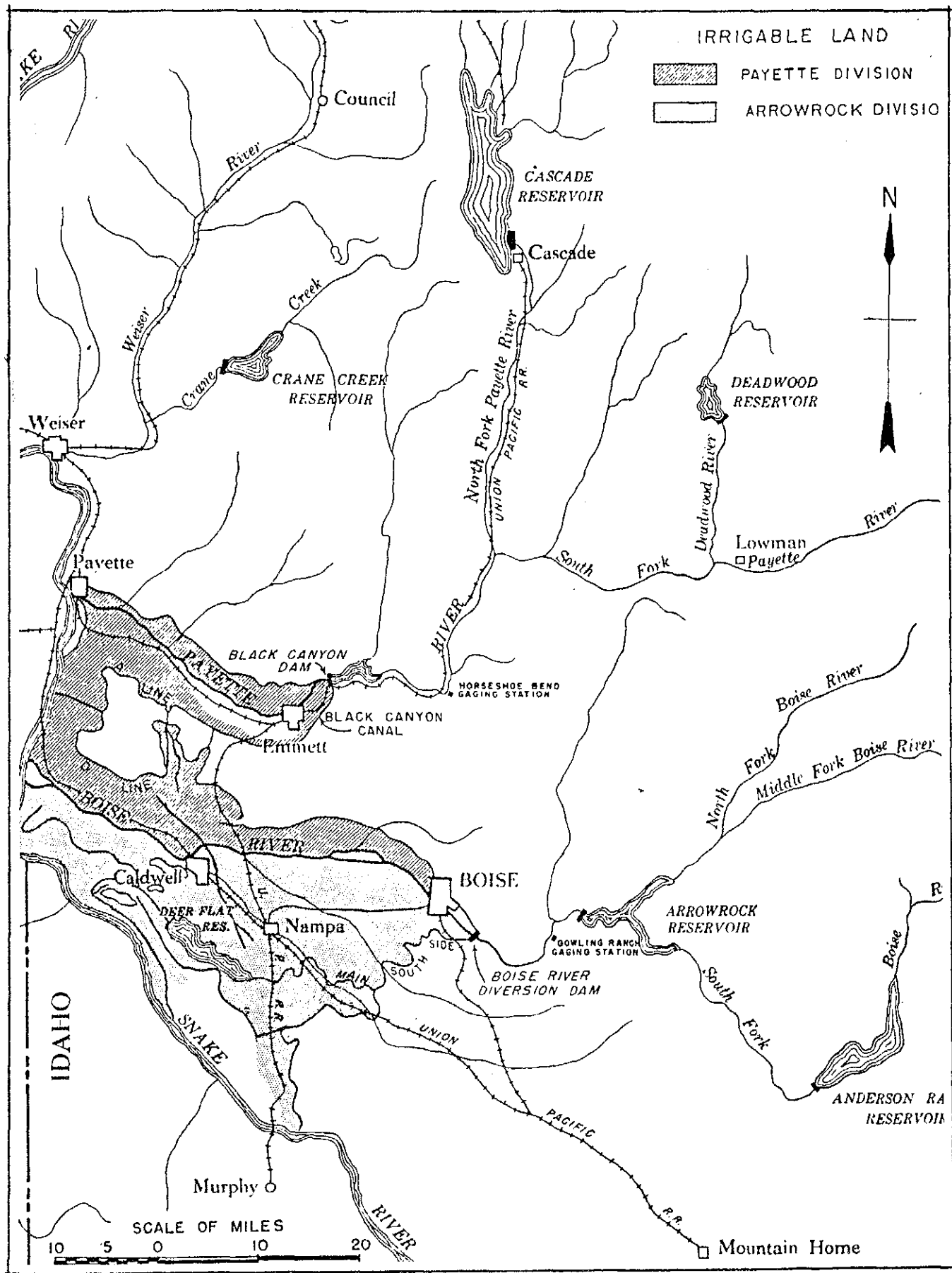
The Carey Act represented a transition from total reliance on private irrigation development in the 19th century to the 20th-century practice in which the federal government took almost total responsibility for some irrigation developments. Under the Carey Act, the United States offered to transfer up to one million acres to each of the western states. The states were then encouraged to organize large-scale irrigation projects by finding private entrepreneurs to build the necessary dams and canals and by selling land to settlers who would in turn buy water from the private developers. Idaho made more extensive, successful, use of the Carey Act than any other state. Development under the Carey Act, however, was limited. Although private investors found western irrigation attractive, capital could not be attracted in large enough blocks to undertake most projects.⁴

Despite Idaho's success in bringing large tracts of land under irrigation with the assistance of provisions in the Carey Act, many engineers, conservationists, and politicians from western states pressured Congress to involve the federal government more directly in the development of reclamation projects. With the support of a new president, Theodore Roosevelt, Congress passed the Reclamation Act of 1902, which created the Reclamation Service as a new branch of the Geological Survey. F.H. Newell, who had been Chief Hydrographer for the Geological Survey, was placed in charge of the Reclamation Service with the title of Chief Engineer. Funded largely by the sale of public lands and staffed largely by engineers, the Reclamation Service began almost immediately to build large dams, reservoirs, and canal systems, and to establish irrigation districts through which farmers who received water from the federal projects would manage its use. Farmers would also pay for

the water they received, theoretically reimbursing the government for the costs of construction and operation. By 1907, more than twenty-five new projects had been authorized and almost 400,000 acres had received irrigation water from project works. One of the largest of the early federal reclamation projects was the Payette-Boise Project, designed to utilize water from the Boise and Payette rivers to irrigate lands in the area west of Boise.⁵

The first irrigated farming in the Boise Valley occurred in the 1840s at Fort Boise, a fur trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company at the confluence of the Boise and Snake Rivers. Major settlement in the Boise area did not begin, however, until the local discovery of gold in 1862. By the following year, the ensuing gold rush brought almost twenty thousand residents to the Boise Valley, most of whom had to rely on supplies of food brought from outside the region. Farmers and ranchers quickly established local operations to feed the mining camps, and by the time the city of Boise was founded in 1864, fields were already being irrigated in the valley. Irrigation systems quickly grew from small canals dug by individuals to larger supply networks built and operated by private companies. With further discoveries of gold in the area and the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s, irrigated agriculture continued to be profitable. This in turn attracted outside capital. Larger companies developed larger canal systems, such as the New York Canal (which has since been modified by the Bureau), both for farming and to deliver water to placer gold mining operations. But by the end of the 19th century, about 148,000 acres were under irrigation, but irrigation in the Boise Valley faced several major problems, foremost among them a tangle of legal controversies over water rights and the need for upstream storage to provide reliable water supply late in the growing season. Passage of the Reclamation Act of 1902 offered a solution to the problems, because a comprehensive federal project could untangle the legal web and could afford the cost of storage facilities.⁶

With the water rights cases about to be adjudicated, the Boise Project was authorized in 1905. It initially focused on irrigating lands along the Boise River. Major construction projects included the Boise River Diversion Dam, the Main Canal (now called the New York Canal because it follows the old New York Canal for much of its route), the Deer Flat Embankments which impounded a large off-stream reservoir known as Lake Lowell, and canals and laterals for the various irrigation districts served by the project. Within 10 years, the Reclamation Service had built a hydroelectric generating plant at the Diversion Dam and another major storage facility, Arrowrock Dam at the juncture of the Boise River's main channel and south fork. After World War I, project planners turned their attention northward to the fertile but arid Payette River Valley. The key facilities of what became the Payette Division of the Boise Project were a diversion dam and a companion hydroelectric plant along the Payette River, in Black Canyon near Emmett (see map on p. 5).⁷

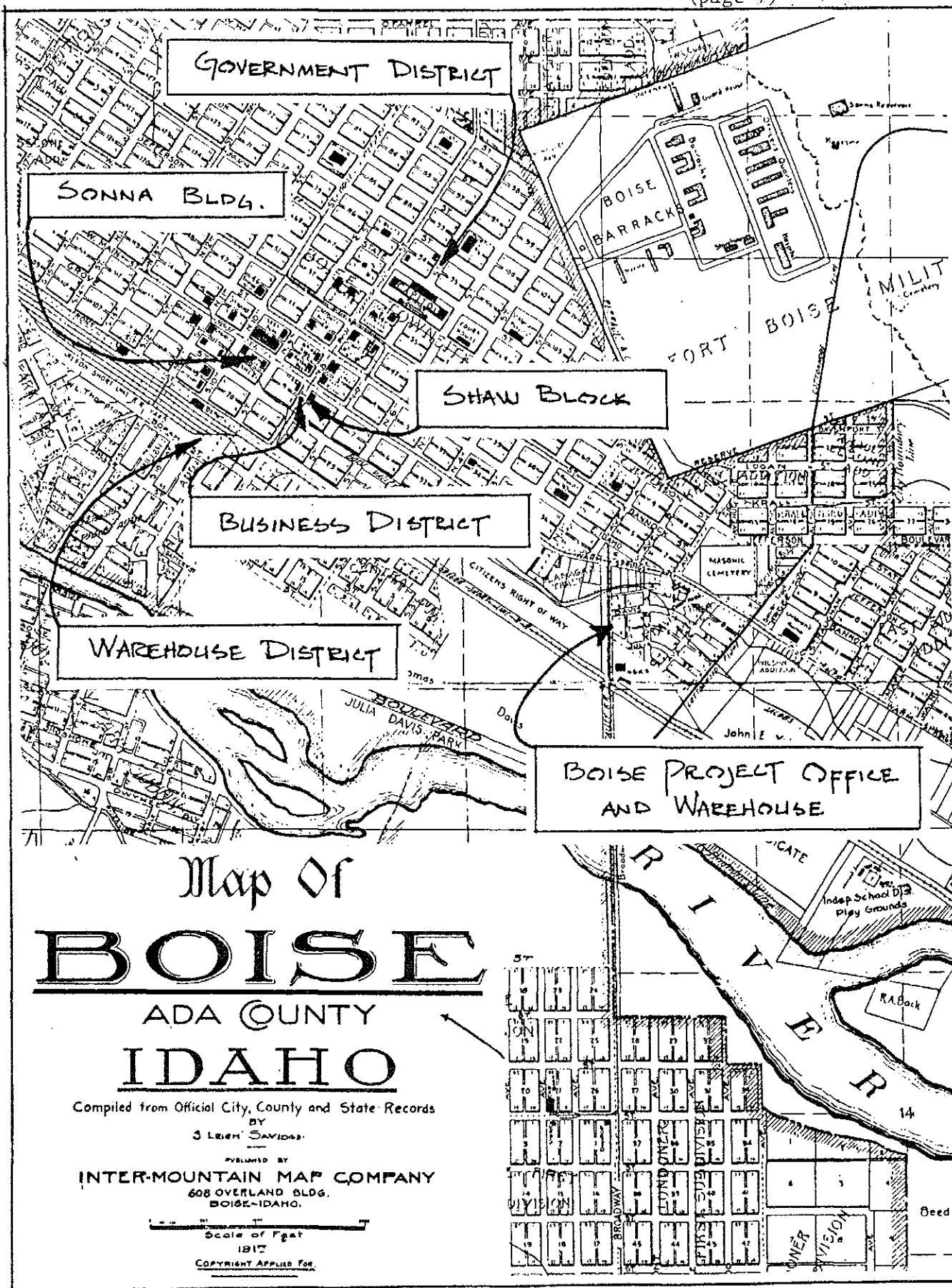


Early Reclamation Service Offices in Boise

D.W. Ross established the first offices of the Reclamation Service in Boise in 1903 in three rented rooms in the Sonna Building, located in the city's downtown district on the 900 block of Main Street. Reclamation's office needs grew so that the agency rented eleven rooms in 1909 when it moved to the nearby Shaw Block, located on the 100 block of South 8th Street. The agency used those rooms to provide office space for the Supervising Engineer, the Project Manager, and other employees. By the time the Reclamation Service was ready to move into its own new office building early in 1912, it was renting nineteen rooms in the Shaw Block (see map on p. 7).⁸

Meanwhile, in 1908 F.H. Newell, Director of the Reclamation Service, had instructed W.H. Sanders, Reclamation's Consulting Engineer in Boise, to investigate several locations for the possibility of establishing a warehouse and material storage yards near the sites of the construction work on the Boise Project. These facilities were intended for storage of excess construction material from the on-going projects, such as the construction of Deer Flat Embankments, the New York Canal, and the Boise River Diversion Dam. Newell wanted Reclamation to have its own railroad spur so that these materials could readily be shipped to other parts of the country in case of an emergency. To this basic requirement, he added the possibility of securing storage for concrete forms for use elsewhere, building corrals for livestock, and erecting offices for the engineers or dwellings for employees.⁹

Sanders' investigative visits to various communities gave the impression to some local community boosters that Reclamation was interested in a new site for permanent offices. Believing that having the Reclamation offices in their respective communities would bring prestige and spur economic development, promoters in Nampa and Caldwell made generous offers of free land at very desirable locations. Based on the size and location of the lot offered in Nampa, Sanders recommended that community as the site for the warehouse. Local newspapers immediately seized upon this decision as an indication that the Reclamation offices would be moving to Nampa, causing a storm of protest from other areas. Letters were sent not only to the Boise and Washington D.C. offices of the Reclamation Service, but to the Secretary of the Interior and Idaho's Senator Borah as well. The Boise Commercial Club protested that because of transportation connections, especially in the form of interurban lines, Boise was more conveniently situated for the majority of farmers in the project. The Payette-Boise Water Users' Association, recognizing that whatever facilities Reclamation built would eventually be charged to the water users and expecting that whatever offices were built would eventually become offices of the Association when it took over operation of the project, asked that a decision on location be delayed until the Association could poll its members. Although the Association was located at the time in Caldwell, its president further requested that Reclamation delay any decision to move its offices so that any unnecessary cause for division among the membership could be eliminated.¹⁰



F.E. Weymouth, the new supervising engineer, decided to remain in rental offices in Boise for the next couple of years, in part because of advice received from the Director of the Reclamation Service. Newell reminded his engineers in Idaho that Reclamation's basic need was for a siding and warehouse, that the location of the engineers' offices should be selected based on efficiency of operation as opposed to rent or political considerations, and that the office of the Supervising Engineer had to provide him with easy access to the Minidoka Project (some 200 miles to the east). Reclamation signed a lease for space in the Shaw Block. Meanwhile, Reclamation built small warehouses along sidings in both Nampa and Caldwell.¹¹

Construction of the Boise Project Office

The year 1910 was one of the busiest years of construction in Boise's history. By this time, the business district of Boise had become clearly defined. The central commercial district consisted of blocks along both sides of Main Street and also along some sections of Idaho between 6th Street and 12th Street. Evolving between the State Capitol at 7th and State streets and the central commercial district, a government district featured the Post Office/Federal Courthouse and the Ada County Courthouse as well as private office buildings, hotels, and churches. Southwest of the central business district along 8th Street was the warehouse district, set between tracks which ran along alleys on behind either side of the street. Each of these districts had witnessed extensive new construction during the first decade of the 20th century and would see continued growth (see map on p. 7).¹²

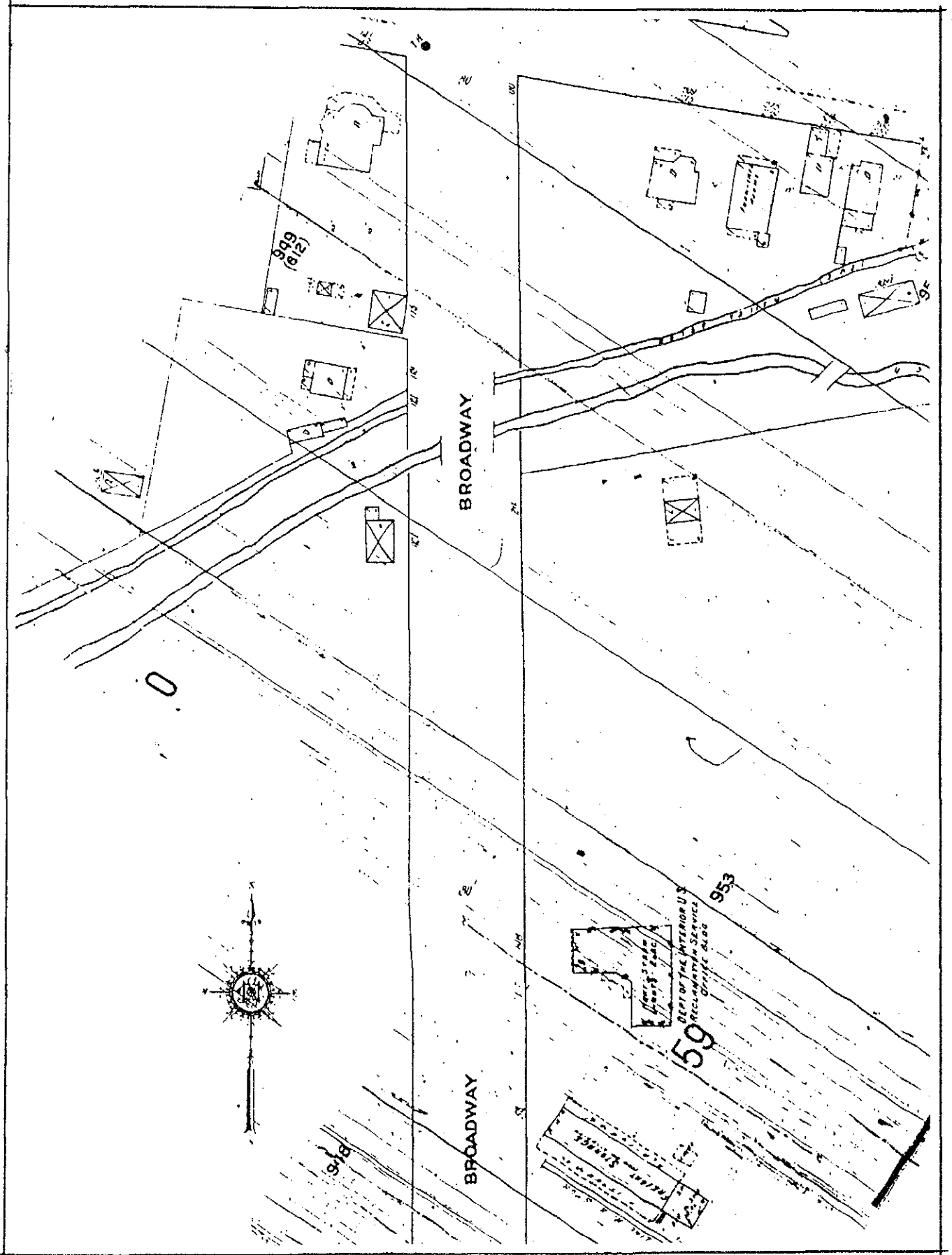
But it was the congestion brought about by this growth which the Reclamation Service sought to avoid in its selection of a site for its facilities. Three years earlier during the location controversy, Newell had offered the opinion that "It is not necessary for our purposes to have a lot in the best part of the city, or even in the localities deemed best from the ordinary business standpoint. For our purposes, it is more satisfactory to be a little at one side rather than in the business center."¹³

In 1910, the Reclamation Service obtained a temporary warehouse in Boise at Front Street and 18th, west of the central business district. Although this facility did not have a railroad siding as Reclamation desired, it was used until a better location was secured. In 1911, the Secretary of the Interior approved the purchase of a lot along Broadway on Boise's east end for a warehouse and siding. The Secretary also approved the construction of an office building on that lot to house the offices of the Boise Project and the supervising engineer. This meant the Reclamation Service would not be locating offices in the Federal Courthouse -- built in 1902-05 and already overcrowded by 1911 -- or elsewhere in the government office district of Boise because even if space had been available, it would have placed the engineers at some distance from their warehouse and railroad siding, something Newell

had stated would be impractical. The lot was located in an undeveloped area of town on Broadway two blocks south of Warm Springs Avenue. By the turn of the 20th century, Warm Springs Avenue had developed as a prominent residential street, and several large dwellings stood near the intersection with Broadway. About a block south of Warm Springs Avenue, the Idaho Valley Canal and the Jacobs Ditch flowed under Broadway. In the three-block area along Broadway between these channels and the Boise Branch of the Oregon Short Line Railroad to the south, no buildings had been erected. This provided the Reclamation Service with what it considered an ideal location for its office and storage facilities (see map on p. 10).¹⁴

The site on Broadway offered the potential of a private railroad spur, a warehouse, and plenty of room for expansion of storage facilities. Ample ground for storage had now become especially important as Reclamation made plans to build Arrowrock Dam to impound a major storage reservoir on the Boise River for the Boise Project. To be built as a concrete arch structure, Arrowrock would become the tallest dam in the world. Such a construction project would require great quantities of material to be shipped to Boise by rail and then transported to the damsite some twenty miles up the Boise River. For this task, the government decided to build its own railroad, the Boise and Arrowrock, with freight terminal facilities along the tracks of the Oregon Short Line at Broadway in Boise. The Oregon Short Line would move cars along its tracks three miles from Boise to Barber, from where the government's Boise and Arrowrock locomotives would pull the cars the remaining seventeen miles to the dam. The railroad was designated a common carrier so that it could haul freight other than that intended for construction of the dam. The railroad would also haul passengers: construction crews, official visitors, and sight-seers on excursions to witness the immense construction project. Placing its office next to the Reclamation railroad depot made it convenient for Reclamation engineers to monitor the shipment of materials for construction of the dam as well as to travel to and from the dam construction site as needed.¹⁵

Once given the authority to construct a new office building, supervising engineer Weymouth had a local architectural firm prepare preliminary plans and specifications for the building (Reclamation records do not identify which firm prepared the plans). Weymouth's office then revised the plans to meet the particular requirements of the Reclamation Service. Because the project was anticipated to cost in excess \$10,000, Weymouth was required to submit the plans to Newell for approval. Although he found the plans to be generally acceptable, Newell did offer a few suggestions. Because of the planned proximity of the office to the railroad tracks and passing steam locomotives, he suggested that Weymouth specify a more fire-proof roofing than wood shingles and that the extra cost of reinforced concrete floors and columns be explored. Neither idea, however, was incorporated into the plans as built. He also recommended that the vault on each floor -- intended for safe storage of cash and valuable documents -- have only one entrance for greater fire protection and that the toilets be given greater separation, ideas that were



apparently accepted by Weymouth. Newell also suggested that the vault be relocated from its present location to another, perhaps the northeast corner, to make the vault more accessible to the fiscal agent and the bookkeepers. Other arguments he offered in favor of his suggestion were: it would make it possible to make the vault rectangular, thereby reducing cost; should the building burn, the vault would be less enveloped by fire and therefore easier to protect; and "the rather objectionable blank space in the front of the building facing Broadway would be eliminated." Weymouth evidently chose not to accept this proposed design change. Newell also made suggestions pertaining to the wording of the specifications.¹⁶

On July 27, 1911, the Reclamation Service issued an advertisement for bids to construct the new office building. The agency opened bids on August 15 and on October 16 notified Whiteway-Lee Construction Company of Boise that its base bid of \$12,396.00 had been accepted. Reclamation set January 17, 1912 as the date for completion. The smaller contracts for the plumbing and heating systems were awarded to the Idaho Hardware and Plumbing Company of Boise.¹⁷

Whiteway-Lee Construction Company formed in about 1911, with Joseph Sullivan as president, Augustus S. Whiteway as vice president and general manager, and C. Herbert Lee as secretary and treasurer. The company only lasted until about 1917, the year Lee died. Lee arrived in Boise in about 1906 and worked as a draftsman for J.E. Tourtellotte and Company, the most prominent architectural firm in the city. He moved to Lewiston, Idaho, in 1908, but returned to Boise in 1911 to help form the Whiteway-Lee Company. As early as 1905, Whiteway had a contracting partnership with Warren Hicks. From 1906 until he joined forces with Lee and Sullivan, Whiteway worked as an independent general contractor. After the dissolution of Whiteway-Lee, Whiteway returned to his independent business until his death in 1922. Joseph Sullivan was a stone and marble cutter working for the Capital Marble Works in Boise shortly after 1900. In 1904 he became a general contractor, operating independently until he joined Whiteway and Lee as president of their company. After Lee died in 1917, Sullivan apparently left Boise.¹⁸

Whiteway-Lee completed construction virtually on time so that the Reclamation Service was able to vacate its rooms in the Shaw Block on January 31, 1912. The new building for the Reclamation Service included rooms for the irrigation manager and his staff, the fiscal agent and his staff, the purchasing agent, the chief clerk, and various bookkeepers and secretaries on the first floor; and rooms for the supervising engineer, the project engineer, designing engineers, the examiner, and draftsmen on the second floor. The second floor also included a room to house the equipment and an operator for the Boise Project's telephone system. Total cost of the building, including design, land, base construction contracts, extras, and landscaping, was a little more than \$21,000.¹⁹

By the time construction had begun on the new office building, Reclamation had already built a warehouse immediately to the south and the Oregon Short Line had placed a spur along the south side of the new warehouse. The warehouse had its own freight office and would also serve as a passenger depot for the Boise and Arrowrock Railroad. By the end of December 1911, the Boise and Arrowrock was providing passenger service to the dam, and during the entire construction period excursions to watch the construction provided the government a means of making profit on its line. In March 1912, the Reclamation Service leased 4.5 acres immediately south of its new office building and warehouse and immediately adjacent to the Oregon Short Line's branch running from Boise to Barber. On this ground, Reclamation built a large storage yard, stables, and additional warehouses.²⁰

Early in its occupancy, the Boise Project Office provided space for about 30 Reclamation employees, including project staff and the supervising engineer's staff. Following completion of Arrowrock Dam, both segments of the Reclamation organization continued to occupy the building. When the Boise Project Board of Control came into being in 1927, it took control of the operation and maintenance of the building, although it was still the property of the United States Government. The Board of Control occupied the first floor and the Bureau of Reclamation (successor agency to the Reclamation Service) occupied the second. By 1954, the Bureau had reorganized its bureaucratic structure for much of Idaho so that the Boise Project and several other projects were all administered by the Central Snake Projects Office, housed on the second floor. That year, the Central Snake Projects Office moved out of the Boise Project Office and into a building occupied by the Bureau's regional office, next to the old Idaho Water Resources Building (near the old fair grounds). The now-defunct Snake River Planning Office of the Bureau then moved into the second floor of the Boise Project Office. When the new Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse was completed on Fort Street in 1973, the Bureau's regional office moved into that building and the Central Snake Projects Office moved back into the Boise Project Office, resulting in the present occupancy of the building. The Board of Control occupies most of the first floor with the New York Irrigation District at the south end, and the Central Snake Projects Office occupies the second floor.²¹

Despite these changes in occupancy, few alterations have been made to the building itself. Perhaps the most significant visual change to the building has been the planting of trees and shrubs on the grounds. This landscaping was done by Claude Buckner, who began working for the Bureau of Reclamation as the janitor of the building in 1925. A few years after he took charge of maintenance of the building, Buckner found a man willing to donate some elm trees if Buckner would transport them himself (Reclamation was unwilling to pay for the landscaping improvements). Buckner carried three seedlings on the back of his bicycle to plant them where they still thrive today, some 60 years later. He also planted the shrubs in front of the porch and at the west and south ends of the building.²²

The Boise Project Office is still owned by the U.S. Government. It is one of the many improvements — along with dams, canals, and laterals — for which the water users on the Boise Project pay and which the Board of Control administers and maintains. The New York Irrigation District and the Central Snake Projects Office pay rent to the Board of Control for the space they occupy.

ENDNOTES

1. H.H. Caldwell and Merle Wells, "Economic and Ecological History Support Study for a Case Study of Federal Expenditures on a Water and Related Land Resource Project, Boise Project, Idaho and Oregon," report prepared for the Idaho Water Resource Board, June 1974, pp. 6-7; Paul W. Gates, History of Public Land Law Development (Washington, DC: Zenger Publishing Company, Inc., 1968), pp. 638-643.
2. Gates, Public Land Law, pp. 645-646.
3. Ibid., pp. 646-648.
4. Caldwell and Wells, "Economic and Ecological History," p. 7; Golze, Reclamation in the United States, p. 19.
5. Ottis Peterson, "The Story of a Bureau," Journal of the West 7 (January 1968): 87, 90; Golze, Reclamation in the United States, pp. 13, 25-26; Arthur Powell Davis, Irrigation Works Constructed by the United States Government (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1917), p. 96.
6. Caldwell and Wells, "Economic and Ecological History," pp. 21, 31-42; Paul L. Murphy, "Early Irrigation in the Boise Valley," Pacific Northwest Quarterly 44 (October 1953): 177-184; Bureau of Reclamation, Reclamation Project Data (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 25.
7. For general historical background on the Boise Project, see "Reclamation Progress in Idaho," Reclamation Era 31 (August 1941), 212-214; "Boise Project," in Project Data, compiled by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Water and Power Resources Service, (Denver: Government Printing Office, 1981), pp. 43-47.
8. Gilbert H. Hogue, "History of the Payette-Boise Project from the Beginning to 1912," 1916, p.128, unpublished report, copies of which are on file at the Central Snake Projects Office, the Board of Control, the Pacific Northwest Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation, all in Boise, and on microfilm at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

9. Newell to Sanders, 12 December 1908, and Newell to Lowell, 12 December 1908, Record Group 115, entry 3, box 406, file 699-5, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter identified as NARA).
10. "Nampa Gets the Reclamation Offices," The Idaho Statesman, 27 August 1908; Lowell to Newell, 28 August 1908, Atkinson to Garfield, 11 September 1908, Sanders to Newell, 10 October and 7 November 1908, Lowell to Davis, 23 November 1908, RG-115, entry 3, box 406, file 699-5, NARA.
11. Newell to Lowell, 12 December 1908, Weymouth to the Director, 2 March 1909, RG-115, entry 3, box 406, file 699-5, NARA; Hogue, "History of the Payette-Boise Project," p. 130.
12. "Real Estate Quiet Though Values Exceed Last Year's," The Idaho Statesman, 31 December 1911; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Boise, 1912; Richard Briggs, "Lower Main Street Commercial Historic District," 1980, National Register nomination on file at the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, Boise; Arthur A. Hart, "Boise Capitol Area District," 1976, National Register nomination on file at the Idaho SHPO; Don Hibbard, "South Eighth Street Historic District," 1977, National Register nomination on file at the Idaho SHPO.
13. Director to Weymouth, 12 December 1908, RG-115, entry 3, box 386, file 11, NARA.
14. Weymouth to the Director, 8 June 1911, RG-115, entry 3, box 406, file 699-5, NARA; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Boise, Idaho, May 1903, sheet 24, 1912, sheet 59; Community Services Collaborative, "Historic Structures Report for Post Office and Courthouse Building, Boise, Idaho," 1984, historic structures report on file at the Idaho SHPO, pp. 1-3.
15. A general history of the Boise and Arrowrock Railroad may be found in the chapter titled "The Arrowrock Express" in Jim Wetherell's The Log Trains of Southern Idaho (Denver: Sundance Publications, Ltd., 1989), pp. 25-55.
16. Director to Weymouth, 14 July 1911, RG-115, entry 3, box 386, file 11, NARA.
17. Hogue, "History of the Payette-Boise Project," p. 128; Whiteway-Lee Construction Company to Supervising Engineer, bid dated 15 August 1911, pp. 154-156, RG-115, entry 3, box 386, file 11, and "Miscellaneous Structures Report, 1909-1913," RG-115, entry 10, microfilmed and recorded on M-96, roll 21, NARA.
18. Minutes of the Whiteway-Lee Construction Company, 27 October 1911, RG-115, entry 3, box 386, file 11-B; Farr and Smith's Boise City and Ada County Directory, 1901-02, listing under Sullivan; Polk's Boise City Directory, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906-07, 1908, 1909-10, 1911, 1912-13, 1914, 1915, 1917, 1918-19,

listings under, Lee, Sullivan, Whiteway, and Whiteway-Lee Construction Company; The Idaho Statesman, 19 October 1922.

19. Hogue, "History of the Payette-Boise Project," p. 128-129; "Annual Project History of the Boise Project, Vol 2, 1914-1915," p. 114, unpublished report on file at the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, Boise; Department of the Interior, United States Reclamation Service, "Idaho District and Boise Project Office Building," June 1911, sheet 2, "First Floor Plan," and sheet 3, "Second Floor Plan," drawings on aperture cards at the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, Bureau of Reclamation, Boise.

20. Weymouth to Mayor and Common Council of Boise, 11 November 1911, and Walker R. Young, "Boise & Arrowrock Railroad Operation and Maintenance Report," March 15, 1916, in RG-115, entry 3, box 406, file 699-9, NARA; "Office Building Is Almost Ready" and "All the Way by Rail from Boise to Arrowrock," The Idaho Statesman, 16 November and 20 December 1911; "History of the Payette-Boise Project," p.130.

21. "Annual Project History of Boise Project, Vol. 2 1914-1915," p. 130; Jack Hanson, personal interview by author at the Central Snake Projects Office, 14 June 1990.

22. Claude Buckner, personal interview by author at Buckner's home, 820 East Bannock, Boise.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Boise Project Office is an early-20th-century brick office structure. The building consists of two stories and a basement, is L-shaped in plan, and has a hipped roof. Typical of brick-masonry buildings of the period, the Boise Project Office features segmental-arch window openings, brick string courses, wood double-hung sash windows, and a relatively formal composition of design elements including a symmetrically-located front-entry porch. The interior of the building is exceptionally intact and also exhibits expected characteristics of the period, including wainscoting, corniced headers over door and window openings, and a centrally-located, open stairway. Moreover, many pieces of early, if not original, furniture survive.

The Boise Project Office has been well maintained over the years so that there is little significant deterioration of fabric on either the interior or the exterior. Other than a few minor alterations, the building stands as it was when completed in 1912. Landscaping of trees and shrubs, while enhancing the setting of the building, obscure some of its features such as the porch.

Description of the Exterior

The two-story, L-shaped Boise Project Office is located adjacent to Broadway, a north-south street in the eastern section of Boise. One stem of the building's "L" plan is perpendicular to Broadway and the other is parallel, giving the building a north/south, east/west orientation. The building measures 70 feet along each of its long sides (north and east) and the ends of the building are 30 feet wide. The inner sides of the "L" each measure 29 feet 4 inches from the ends to the point where they meet a diagonal, southwest-facing wall in which the main entry is centrally located. This diagonal wall is 15 feet wide. The location of the main entry in this diagonal wall gives the building a front orientation to the southwest. A symmetrical, 8-foot-wide porch serves the front entry. The diagonal face of the porch is 8 feet 6 inches wide and its west and south sides are each 7 feet 9 inches wide.

The foundation system for the building consists of concrete foundation walls for the main building and the porch, brick interior partitions in the northeast corner of the building, wood posts on concrete spot footings at the west and south ends of the building, and a separate foundation system under the concrete vaults, which are stacked on top of each other one per floor. The concrete perimeter foundation walls for the building are 13 inches thick, 6 feet 8 inches high, and rest on concrete footings 2 feet 6 inches wide. Along the north and east sides of the building, the natural grade is 4 feet below the top of the foundation walls. Along the other sides of the building, fill placed at the time of construction brought the finished grade to the tops

of the foundation walls. The brick partitions exist in those portions of the basement where the building in its original condition had rooms with finished floors. The walls are 9 inches thick, rest on concrete footings, and support the first floor joists. The wood posts (some 6 x 6 inches and some 8 x 8 inches) have spacings ranging from 7 feet 6 inches to 11 feet 6 inches and support 8 x 10 inch wood girders for the floor system above. The girders are not exactly centered between the perimeter walls, their center lines being located 13 feet 3 inches from the north and east walls and 14 feet 7 inches from the south and west walls.

The perimeter walls of the building are 13 inches thick and the outer width of brick is laid in running bond. The exterior brick surfaces are articulated by string courses and slightly projecting segmental arches over window openings. Segmental arches consist of three rowlock courses. On the south and west sides and end walls of the building, there are corbelled string courses at grade and at the first and second floor window sill levels. The string courses consist of a stretcher course, a header course, and another stretcher course, each projecting further from the plane of the wall and all topped by a rowlock course, the latter being flush with the top stretcher course and serving as the sill for the windows. On the north and east sides, only the second floor string course is present. The first floor window openings have projecting rowlock sills. A rowlock course between the windows and flush with the wall demarks the level. The brick is flush with the concrete foundation walls on these two sides, with the transition distinguished by a header course. The grade and first floor string courses found on the other sides return along the north and east sides, but only as far as the first window openings. The first floor corbelled string also ends at the porch; within the porch, the level is articulated by a flush rowlock course similar to that found on the rear walls.

The structural system for the building consists of the brick bearing walls around the perimeter and an interior post and girder system. The interior structural system consists of 6 x 8 inch posts located over the interior basement structural system; 6 x 12 inch floor girders; and 2 x 12 inch floor joists, 16 inches on center, spanning between the perimeter walls and the girders. The second floor ceiling joists are 2 x 6 inches, 16 inches on center. The first and second floor joists are let into the walls of the vaults as necessary. The post and girder structural system allows an open and flexible office plan. Restrooms and some offices are enclosed by partitions and other areas are left as larger open spaces.

The front porch for the building is located in the inner angle of the "L" and, because of the orientation of the diagonal wall, is basically "U" or three-sided in shape. The porch has a concrete slab floor which spans between a 13-inch-thick brick bearing wall and the adjacent perimeter walls of the main building. Four concrete steps lead to each end (west and south) of the porch. Brick walls extend above the floor to form a railing along the porch. The tops of the walls are 2 feet 6 inches above the floor level and feature

corbelling leading to a rowlock top course with concrete mortar coping. Four brick columns are situated at the porch corners. The columns and a brick pilaster adjacent to each set of steps support the shed roof over the porch. The columns and pilasters have simple corbelled capitals, reflective of the other brick detailing of the building. The porch ceiling and ends of the porch roof are finished with beaded ceiling board. Craftsman style rafter tails support the eaves of the porch roof. Opposite the main entry is a centrally-located cast plaque which reads "United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation."

The hipped roof of the Boise Project Office corresponds to the shape of the building. An access hatch to the roof is located on the flat portion of the roof near the center of the building. A flagpole originally rose above the flat area as well. The roof has four dormers: one each over the south and west ends, one over the main entry, and one along the north side. The dormers are louvered and serve to ventilate the attic space. The main roof and the roofs of the dormers are covered with wood shingles over 1-inch wood sheathing. The ridges and the hips are covered with metal caps and there are small metal finials where the hips meet the ridges at the west and south ends. The dormer roofs are supported by 2 x 4-inch rafters and the main roof is supported by 2 x 4-inch rafters. Every other rafter of the main roof has a cross-brace from its mid-point to the girder which runs along the middle of each wing of the building. Exposed rafter tails, which are 3 x 8 inches and 3 feet long, support the eaves. Rain gutters and downspouts have been added long the east, south, and west sides, but not along the north side or the south and west ends. There is a single brick chimney near the east end of the north side of the building.

As already mentioned, the main entry is centrally-located in the diagonal wall at the inner angle of the "L" and under the porch. The entry consists of a paneled wood door with a single, beveled-glass light and original bronze scroll door handle with thumb piece. The door surround is comprised of a multiple-light transom and symmetrical side lights above paneled bases. The main entry does not have an arched opening, but rather a steel lintel supporting a rowlock course. At the west end of the porch is a secondary door opening which has the same segmental arch typical of the window openings. It has only a door and single-light transom; the door is paneled and has a single light. At the east rear of the building, there is a single segmental-arch door opening with a single-light transom and a modern replacement door. To the north of this rear door is a small window opening which originally housed the coal door.

Except for the east side, the building exhibits a regular pattern of window openings. Most openings, except a few on the east side and those in the diagonal, southwest-facing wall, are 40 inches wide. Window openings on the first floor are generally 6 feet tall, openings on the second floor are generally 5 feet 6 inches tall, and on the basement level they are generally 2 feet 10 inches tall. The east side of the building has irregular fenestration

because the stairs and bathrooms are located against this wall. With the exception of the basement windows along the north side and the two small windows at the top of the stairs, all windows in the building have one-over-one double-hung wood sash. The north basement windows have three-over-one double-hung wood sash and the two windows at the top of the stairs have single, fixed wood sash.

Description of the Interior

The first and second floors of the Boise Project Office serve as offices and the basement houses utility rooms, storage, and a meeting room. The main entry of the building leads into a vestibule, which in turn leads into the main hall. On the southeast side of the hall is the vault and on the northwest side is a counter which was identified on the original plans as being an information booth. The entry to the vault is diagonal to the main walls of the building but parallel to the vestibule. The stairs leading to the second floor and the basement are on the east side of the hall and against the east wall of the building. From the hall, a double-loaded corridor extends to the south; on the west side of the corridor is the vault, on the right side are the restrooms and an office, and at the south end of the corridor are the offices of the New York Irrigation District. As the building was originally constructed, a door just west of the information booth led into a large open area which encompassed the entire west end of the building, as well as the spaces north of the hall and the stairs. Partitions have since been installed to sub-divide the area into three spaces: the board room for the Boise Project Board of Control along the west end, the Water Master's Office along the south side, and secretaries' office along the north side. The latter are still sub-divided by partitions 3 feet 6 inches tall, which are original to the building. The other significant change has been the elimination of a partition which once separated a passageway from the large open office area. This passage allowed workers on the Boise Project to enter the building through the secondary entry off the porch and step up to a teller's window at the fiscal agent's office to receive their pay or to a teller's window at the information booth.

The second floor is arranged similarly to the first, with a hall at the head of the stairs and double-loaded corridors extending to the west and the south. Adjacent to the diagonal wall, corresponding to where the vestibule and the information booth are located on the first floor, the second floor has a storage room which has been converted to an office. The second floor vault is situated directly over the first floor vault and has the same diagonal entry. The hardware for this and the other vaults in the building was manufactured by the Sabath Safe and Lock Company of Chicago. Individual offices are located along the hall and corridors. The only alteration to the second floor plan is that the open drafting room at the south end has been divided into two offices by a north-south partition.

The basement has corridors which extend west and south from the foot of the stairs. In the northeast corner of the basement was the coal bin, which has been converted to an extra utility room. West of it are the boiler room and the janitor's room. At the west end of the building, which was originally unfinished space, a partition has been installed along the line of structural posts creating a storage room along the north and a meeting room along the south side. At the south end, a partition has been installed along the line of posts opposite the vault to extend the corridor and create a small storage room. Another partition has been installed perpendicular to the line of posts and even with the south wall of the vault to create a large storage room for plan files.

The split flights of stairs run east and west with half-flight landings against the east wall of the building. The landing between the basement and first floor is at grade and accommodates the rear entry. The stairs between the first and second floors are open, with simple 6 x 6-inch newel posts, hand rails, and 1-1/4-inch square balusters.

New floor finishes were installed in the building in 1990. The office areas of the first floor and the entire second floor now have wall-to-wall carpeting, leaving original flooring only in the vestibule, the first floor hall and corridors, and the stairs. Flooring in the vestibule is white ceramic tile in a hexagonal pattern surrounded by a border of square black and white tiles. Similar tile was installed in the passageway which is now part of the Water Master's office and is still in place under the new carpeting. The hall and stairs retain their sheet linoleum flooring, the material which the new carpeting covered throughout the rest of the first and second floors. The basement floor is a concrete slab.

The ceiling of the first floor is the original lath and plaster, while a suspended acoustical tile ceiling was installed in the second floor in the 1970s. The only original light fixtures are in the first floor vestibule, hall, and corridors. They are simple, bronze, incandescent fixtures suspended from the ceiling. Fluorescent fixtures have been installed in the first floor offices and throughout the second floor.

All wall finishes and window trim are essentially unaltered except for paint. Walls are lath and plaster. Millwork around doors and windows consists of plain side trim with a cornice over the openings. At the level of the trim over the doors in the hall and corridors, the trim is continuous along the walls to form a band of molding. In the offices there is a chair molding at the height of 3 feet 6 inches above the floor and a picture molding at the level of the headers over the windows. In the corridors of both floors, but not in the halls, there are bands of transom windows which are continuous, not being limited to the areas over doors. Interior doors in the building are paneled and have single, textured glass lights for offices and paneled without lights for closets, bathrooms, etc. With the exception of the New York Irrigation District at the south end of the first floor, where the

trim has been painted, all of the trim on the first floor retains its original stained finish. All of the trim on the second floor has been painted.

The restrooms appear to be in their original condition. The women's room has two toilet stalls along its north wall and a sink against the east wall. The floor has its original white ceramic tile in a hexagonal pattern and the wainscotting is an embossed wall covering. The men's room has two toilet stalls at the east end of the south wall, a large ceramic floor-mounted urinal at the west end of the south wall, and two sinks toward the middle of the south wall. The men's room also has hexagonal flooring, but unlike the women's room, the men's room has no wainscotting.

Originally, the building was heated by a coal-fired boiler, located in the basement next to the coal bin at the northeast corner of the building. The boiler supplied steam to radiators throughout the building. The original boiler has been replaced with a unit fired with natural gas, but the original radiators still heat the rooms.

Although the telephone system in the building has been removed, another historic electrical system is still in place. Located throughout the building are wall-mounted, push-button alarms complete with metal plates painted to describe the code to use for signalling the location of a fire. For example, the plate for the alarm on the second floor reads: "FIRE ALARM -- 3 Taps Fire 2nd Fl. -- Repeat Several Times."

Description of the Site

The Boise Project Office is located on the east side of Broadway in the eastern part of Boise about two blocks south of Warm Springs Avenue, a major east-west thoroughway. The building is set back from the street about 60 feet. On the west side of Broadway is a small commercial complex. On the north side of the Boise Project Office is a small single-family dwelling built of river cobble which has been converted to a barber shop. It is situated near the northeast corner of the Boise Project Office, so is only visible from the north or northwest. East of the building is an athletic playing field which is surrounded by a chain-link fence. A very large, unpaved parking lot is south of the building. This is where the Reclamation depot and associated buildings once stood; no traces of these buildings survive. Employees of the Boise Project Board of Control, the New York Irrigation District, and the Central Snake Projects Office park along the north side of the parking lot in two or three tiers adjacent to the building, leaving the rest of the parking lot an unoccupied expanse.

Sidewalks approach the Boise Project Office from Broadway to the west end of the front porch and from the parking lot to the south end. The north edge of the parking lot is diagonal, nearly parallel to the diagonal wall at the main entry to the building. Along this line are three large, mature elm

trees which largely obscure the building from the street to the southwest. Along the south and west ends of the building and in front of the porch are large shrubs. These shrubs obscure the porch from any perspective. The lot west and south of the building has a well-maintained lawn. A gravel driveway extends from the parking lot along the east side of the building providing access to the rear entry. A paved parking lot along the north side of the building serves the barber shop.

Proposed Alterations to the Building

To make the Boise Project Office accessible to handicapped persons, the Bureau of Reclamation plans to install an access ramp at the west end of the porch and to modify the men's restroom. The ramp will be built of redwood, set on the existing top step, and extend 30 feet to the west where it will join the existing sidewalk. The ramp will be equipped with a 1-1/2-inch-diameter metal handrails on both sides. In addition, where the existing sidewalk slopes to meet the sidewalk along Broadway, similar handrails will be installed. To make the front doors wheelchair-accessible, an additional 4-1/4 inches of concrete will be added to the porch deck to make it flush with the existing thresholds. To provide a handicapped parking space, a concrete slab will be placed adjacent to Broadway between the existing parking lot and the sidewalk leading to the building. The existing steps and the brick wall next to the steps at the west end of the porch will remain in place.

Alterations to the men's restroom will include the removal of all existing fixtures and installation of new handicapped-accessible fixtures. The area at the east end of the restroom now occupied by two toilet stalls will become a single stall, complete with new toilet of appropriate height and grab bars. At the west end of the south wall, in place of the urinal and one of the sinks, there will be two new urinals with privacy shields. One urinal will be handicapped-accessible and the other will not. The new sink installed between the toilet stall and the urinals will meet federal accessibility standards. The existing door to the bathroom will be hung on new hinges to increase the clear width of the opening. The existing radiator in the bathroom will remain in place. The bathroom will no longer be designated for men only, but will be designated to serve both sexes.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Original Architectural Drawings

Apparently, the original drawings do not exist for this building. The Bureau of Reclamation's Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Boise does, however, hold aperture cards (filmed reproductions) of the original drawings. The photographic negatives and prints included in this HAER package are reproduced from those aperture cards.

Early Views

The only two known early views of the Boise Project Office are part of the National Archives' holdings for the Bureau of Reclamation (Record Group 115). They are included in the Boise Project collection in the Still Photo Branch of the National Archives.

Interviews

Clyde Buckner, interviewed with his wife, Mary, by author at Buckner's home at 830 East Bannock, Boise, on June 15, 1990.

Buckner served as the janitor for the Boise Project Office from 1925 until 1989, when he retired at the age of 93. An African-American, Buckner was born in Oklahoma in 1896 on the family farm and grew up in western Nebraska. Buckner moved with his family to the Caldwell area west of Boise in 1922. Shortly thereafter, he met his wife-to-be, Mary, and they were married in 1924. Mary's father was a Baptist pastor who worked as the janitor of the Boise Project Office. When Mary's father accepted a call from a congregation in Oakland, California, Buckner, who was then working for the Overland automobile dealership in Boise, took the janitor position on a temporary basis. In 1927, after the job was formally advertised, he became a permanent employee. When he took the position, the Bureau's telephone system was still housed in the Boise Project Office and Buckner remembers a telephone operator working in the second floor room designated as the telephone room. He also remembers the secondary front entry being used by Reclamation employees coming into the passage to the teller's window for their pay. Mary, who was a well-known singer, pianist, and organist in her younger years, remembers boarding the Boise and Arrowrock passenger train at the depot next to the Boise Project Office to take excursions to see Arrowrock Dam. Buckner's most visible contribution to the Boise Project Office was to plant the three elms in the late 1920s and the shrubs in later years. When Buckner retired in 1989, the employees of the Board of Control and the Central Snake Projects Office planted an oak tree at the south end of the building in his honor.

Jack Hanson, interviewed by author at the Central Snake Projects Office on June 14 1990.

Hanson first went to work as an engineering aid for the Central Snake Projects Office in 1954 when the office was still located in the Boise Project Office. He has been with the Central Snake Projects Office since that time and now serves as the Chief of Water Operations.

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No other likely sources of information are known. If a clue could be found concerning which architectural firm prepared the preliminary plans and specifications, the relationship of the Boise Project Office to the firm's body of work could be explored.